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Reviews

CYRANO DE BERGERAC, COMÉDIE HÉROÏQUE EN CINQ ACTES par Edmond Rostand, edited with introduction, notes and vocabulary by OSCAR KUHN, Wesleyan University, and HENRY WARD CHURCH, Allegheny College. New York, Henry Holt and Company, [1920]. Pp. xvi, 255.

Even when one is familiar with the criticisms, destructive and otherwise, of which Rostand has been the object, one may confess without shame that his plays can be read again and again with unabated enjoyment. After the delirium caused by the production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* had passed, it was obvious that this play, and still more those that followed it, suffer from defects of form and of style; and that much of what seemed original was in fact derived from others. In the future, possibly, only certain scenes will continue to be admired. It remains true, nevertheless, that Rostand's indomitable idealism, his devotion to beauty, nobility and heroism, his mastery both of lyrical and of dramatic effect, and the stirring nature of his plots, appeal strongly to an age whose dramatic productions are so frequently lacking in all these qualities. The present writer has worn out a copy of Prof. Kuhns' edition of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which for more than twenty years has been the medium through which several generations of students have benefited by coming in contact with this play; and a welcome is assured for a reissue of the edition, with the notes revised and a vocabulary added, making the text available to a still larger circle of readers. A portrait of Coquelin in the part of Cyrano, and illustrations representing the scene of each of the five acts, are not only attractive but valuable as aids in interpreting the play.

The merits and the defects of Professor Kuhns' edition (1899) are sufficiently well known. The introduction was written before the production of *l'Aiglon* and *Chantecler*, and while critics were still under the spell of the first production of *Cyrano*, December 28, 1897. Many difficult words or expressions were left entirely unexplained in the notes, and very little aid was given to enable students to enter into the spirit of the play. Professor Kuhns' appears to have had nothing to do with the revision; in a prefatory note he states that whatever usefulness is added is due entirely to Professor Church. The notes have been reset, many of those that were mere translations being incorporated in the vocabulary; but this has not been consistently done, many being allowed to stand although repeated in the vocabulary, and others not put in the vocabulary at all, so that students will waste time in looking for

them first where they naturally should be. In a few cases vocabulary and notes disagree (*soubrette*, p. 176; *muron*, p. 190). *Nasigère* is wrongly translated in vocabulary as "nasal appendage;" of course it means "nose-bearer" (cf. note to p. 11). *Salade* is given in vocabulary as "salad;" the entire point of its use on p. 120 is that it also means "helmet." *Paf* and *pif* (p. 74) are not in vocabulary or notes; the point of the passage is that *pif* may mean "big nose." "Protoxide of lead" (note, p. 194) is hardly a poetic translation, however literal, for *litharge* (not in vocabulary). Notes should be added on *dire* (p. 113, line 20), on the names on p. 41, and on the implication of *drame espagnol* (p. 41, line 23). Professor Church makes a brave attempt to explain the puzzling line *L'ergot tendu sous la dentelle en tuyau d'orgue* (p. 131): with spur sticking out behind like an organ-pipe;" but is it not more likely that *en tuyau* refers to the *dentelle* of the *canon* worn by the Spaniard in question, and not to the spur? The few other additions which he has made to the notes are helpful, but some really interpretative notes would be welcome. As a single instance, *le laurier et la rose*, "symbols of fame and love" (p. 173), should be compared with the line (p. 170): *Molière a du génie et Christian était beau!*

The most surprising thing about this new edition is that the Introduction has been reprinted from the old plates without change. It does not give the date of Rostand's birth nor of his earlier plays; in fact the order of their production is wrongly stated. In the long discussion of the historical Cyrano de Bergerac, no reference is made to the monograph by Brun (first ed., 1893) nor to the articles by Gautier and Morley. But if the editors and publishers did not wish to bring the Introduction up to date by mentioning Rostand's later works and taking account of the body of criticism that has accumulated concerning him, they might at least have avoided saying in a book copyrighted in 1920: "He is yet young; it will be interesting to watch his future career." They may like to know that Edmond Rostand, de l'Académie Française, died December 2, 1918.

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BEGINNER'S FRENCH READER. PETER J. SCHERER, Director of Modern Languages, Indiana High Schools. Illustrated. World Book Co., Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York, 1919. 181 pp.

According to the author's statement in the preface, the book is intended for pupils who have had one semester's work in French. It is divided into five parts—the reading matter, the supplementary reading matter, the songs, of which there are fifteen, a synopsis of verb conjugations and the vocabulary.